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A

SERMON,

Preached MAY 31, 1791,

In PROVIDENCE, STATE OF RHODE-ISLAND,

On the DEATH of

NICHOLAS BROWN, Esq;

Who died the 29th preceding, Æt. 62.

PUBLISHED AT THE DESIRE OF THE BEREAVED FAMILY.

By SAMUEL STILLMAN, D. D.

PASTOR of the First BAPTIST CHURCH in BOSTON, and FELLOW of R. ISLAND COLLEGE.

PROVIDENCE: Printed by J. CARTER.

A Funeral Sermon.

Pſalm xlvi. 10.

BE STILL, AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD.

THIS Pſalm throughout is calculated for a day of trouble, becauſe it expreſſeth the confidence of the church in GOD, and ſets before us the moſt animating conſiderations. v. 1. "GOD is our refuge and ſtrength, a very preſent help in trouble." He is the believer's *refuge*, to which he may fly for ſafety; and his *ſtrength*, by which he may be ſuſtained under the weight of greateſt trials. Yes, my brethren, he is "a *very preſent* help in trouble." Then we feel we want him moſt; and then it is, that he puts underneath his everlaſting arm.

EVERY

EVERY word in this ſhort ſentence is emphatic, and was deſigned by the Pſalmiſt to convey the pleaſing truth with greater energy.

HE adds, "Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midſt of the ſea." v. 2.

THESE expreſſions are highly figurative—as much as to ſay, "Amidſt the wreck of nature, and the cruſh of worlds," or the various revolutions that take place among the nations, the church will truſt in GOD, and fear no evil. "GOD is in the midſt of her, ſhe ſhall not be moved; GOD ſhall help her, and that right early." v. 5.

"THE heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved:" denoting great troubles in the political and religious world. "He uttered his voice, the earth melted. The LORD of Hoſts is with us; the GOD of Jacob is our refuge. Selah." v. 5, 6. He ſaith to his people,

people, in the time of greateſt afflictions, *Be ſtill, and know that I am* GOD.

I. THESE words imply, that good men are apt to entertain wrong thoughts and tempers, in a time of affliction.

II. THAT it is their duty and intereſt to *be ſtill*; and that nothing tends ſo immediately to produce this temper, as a juſt knowledge of the divine character.

I. GOOD men are apt to entertain wrong thoughts and tempers, in a time of affliction.

THE beſt of men have a body of ſin to bewail and oppoſe; which too often prevails againſt them. "I find then a law," ſays Paul, "that when I would do good, evil is preſent with me. The good I would, I do not; the evil I would not, that I do." This is the common language of real Chriſtians, and of them only. Men who remain in a ſtate of unbelief, generally ſin without controul; excepting at thoſe times when

when they feel the checks of conſcience, after the commiſſion of particular crimes. And then it is not the *principle* of ſin that they lament, but the *act*. Whereas the godly man bewails the principle of corruption, though it only ſtruggles within, and has never iſſued in any open act; becauſe he hates ſin itſelf for its own turpitude, and oppoſition to the divine nature. Though he could be ſecured from the puniſhment, it would not leſſen his hatred of ſin, becauſe he hates whatever he knows to be contrary to the divine attributes. His proſpect of forgiveneſs, through the redemption that is in CHRIST, is always connected with great ſelf-loathing, and oppoſition to ſin. Having been forgiven much, he loves much; and cannot bear to offend that GOD who is glorious in holineſs, and rich in mercy to all who call upon him. Like Joſeph, he cries, when tempted, "How ſhall I do this great wickedneſs, and *ſin againſt GOD?*" He watches his heart, and endeavoureth to keep it with all diligence; yet finds wrong tempers apt to prevail, when preſſed with afflictions.

SEVERE

SEVERE pains produce impatience, if he is not upon his guard; and after all his watchfulneſs, he is ſenſible that his heart is apt to fret againſt the Lord.

WHEN he meets with diſappointments in buſineſs, ſickneſs and death in his family, or among his tendereſt connexions, his common fault is, to look at the dark ſide only; and by keeping his trials ever in view, he forgets GOD, and indulges a diſpoſition to repine. If the partner of his life, or the Iſaac of his family, is cut down, he chooſes ſolitude, that he may indulge his grief; which is greatly heightened, by a recollection of the many pleaſing hours they had enjoyed together; and how much his happineſs depended on the object now torn from him. Often, in idea, does he go to the grave, to weep there. Thus a veil is drawn over all his remaining comforts; and in the loſs of *one* bleſſing, he forgets the *many* that ſurround him. How ungrateful the man, who thus refuſes to ſing of mercy, as well as judgment; for theſe are always blended in the divine œconomy. In

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the moſt diſtreſſing ſcenes, let us not forget to bleſs the Author of the mercies and comforts remaining in our poſſeſſion.

But it is a happy circumſtance, that theſe feelings do not always laſt; their continuance would quite unfit us for every duty of life. Firſt impreſſions are indeed moſt ſenſibly felt; but time will leſſen the degree of painful ſenſibility, and leave the mind at liberty to indulge rational and religious reflections. There are, however, ſome trials that follow us through life; ſuch as the death of a dear friend, or much loved relative. Various occurrences bring him daily into view, and open afreſh the avenues of ſorrow.

"Her ſong ſtill vibrates in my raviſh'd ear,
Still melting there, and with voluptuous pain
*(O to forget her!) thrilling through my heart**."

Sometimes good men think their afflictions are uncommonly great—that they are the effects of divine anger—that they ſhall certainly faint in

* Night Thoughts.

in the day of adverſity—or, that they are all againſt them. But there are many reaſons why the ever bleſſed GOD corrects his people. They have wrong tempers, which muſt be ſubdued;—are guilty of immoderate love of the world—are in danger of being carried away with proſperity. Influenced by their fooliſh, fickle hearts, they ſoon forget a correction; in mercy therefore the LORD repeats the ſtroke. He caſts them into the furnace of affliction; which, in ſome caſes, is heated ſeven times hotter: Yet all the fruit thereof is to take away ſin. If ſo,

II. It is both our duty and intereſt to *be ſtill:*

1. This cannot mean that we ſhould endeavour to *harden ourſelves againſt trouble.* Religion never was deſigned to make *ſtoics* of us; they affirmed, that mankind ought to be alike unmoved with proſperity and adverſity. Were we deſtitute of thoſe tender ſenſibilities, which are equally the ſource of pains and plea-

ſures, we ſhould be unfit for the preſent life; which is a ſtate of friendſhip and ſociety. An unfeeling huſband, wife or child, would be a kind of monſter. How would either properly diſcharge the relative or ſocial duties, if deſtitute of ſympathy and love?—Theſe amiable and uſeful paſſions enable us to pay every neceſſary and kind attention to objects in diſtreſs.—With what ſolicitude do we watch our friends when ſick, through long and gloomy nights; and how willing to attend to all the offices of friendſhip.

But how irkſome would be the taſk, and how ſoon ſhould we be fatigued, were it not for that warm affection we have for them, and prevailing deſire to leſſen their diſtreſs.—To root out thoſe uſeful paſſions, or to prevent their beneficial influence, could not be the deſign of the divine Author of the text.

2. Nor does this exhortation imply, that we ought to *hide all our ſorrows from our friends.* This would be a ſevere injunction, becauſe one

part

part of the happineſs of friendſhip conſiſts in an unreſerved converſation, eſpecially in a day of affliction: Thence ariſeth a great degree of ſupport. "Iron ſharpeneth iron; ſo a man ſharpeneth the countenance of his friend?" In this caſe, "Two are better than one;—for if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: But wo to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up."

The importance of real friendſhip, perhaps, was never more ſtrikingly exemplified, than in the caſe of David and Jonathan: Their ſouls, their joys and ſorrows, were one; and their attachment increaſed with their trials.

In a ſeaſon of proſperity, we ſeem to have many friends; but they fall off in crouds, like leaves in autumn, when poverty and diſtreſs overtake us; the very time when we want them moſt:—Such is human nature.—A faithful friend is hard to find: But having found him, believe me, his price is above rubies. When preſſed with numerous ſorrows, to him you

you may fly, and tell him all your heart. He will not disappoint your confidence, but help you to bear your heavy load. Such a friend emphatically is JESUS CHRIST, who sticketh closer than a brother: "The same yesterday, to-day and forever;" whose language to his afflicted people is, *be still.*——

3. Not that they should sit with folded arms in a day of trouble, or indulge to discouragement and inactivity: On the contrary, new trials always call them to new exertions, and to engage in new duties.—This is particularly the case, when either of the heads of a family is cut down. When a husband and a father falls, the bereaved widow and children sorely feel the effects of the stroke in the derangement of his business and plans. Their dependence on him is at an end. Once perhaps they were amply provided for, without their own care or labour. Now the anxious and afflicted mother must do double duty; fill her own place, and that of her dear departed friend; for the whole care of the family devolves on her.—How changed her situation,

ſituation, though plenty ſmile around! But if *poverty* be added to all her other trials, how great is her affliction!

If, on the other hand, death arreſts an affectionate wife and a tender mother, a veil is drawn at once over all domeſtic happineſs." "She looked well to the ways of her houſhold, and did not eat the bread of idleneſs.—Her children ariſe up, and call her bleſſed; her huſband alſo, and he praiſeth her." His duty is therefore encreaſed; for, beſides his attention to buſineſs abroad, all the concerns of the family fall upon him. His ſorrows are multiplied, and with them his cares. Yet it becomes him to *be ſtill*; not diſcouraged, or inactive:

But in the way of duty to wait on GOD for the iſſue, with abſolute ſubmiſſion.

The Iſraelites at the Red Sea, when purſued by Pharaoh, and hedged in on every ſide, were in a dangerous condition.—The ſea in front, the

the Egyptians in their rear in full purſuit; on the right hand and on the left rocks inacceſſible.—What could they do?—Not the leaſt proſpect of eſcape remained to them.—This, my brethren, was the LORD's time to interpoſe: Therefore Moſes thus addreſſed them: ——"*Stand ſtill, and ſee the ſalvation of the LORD, which he will ſhew to you to-day.*"—As if he ſaid, be not diſmayed; for greater is he who is for you, than they who are againſt you: Wait on the LORD, and he will deliver you.—Or, as David expreſſes himſelf, *be ſtill:* That is, be patient and ſubmiſſive under all your trials. "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth," ſays he, "becauſe thou didſt it."——

AND know that I am GOD: A moſt ſolemn and expreſſive ſentence; exhibiting "a *ſea* of matter in a *drop* of language."—To do which was the boaſt of ancient Greeks; but is indeed the peculiar excellence of the inſpired writings.—What majeſty, what grandeur here! Permit me to arreſt your attention,

tion, while I repeat the ſublime, the wonderful ſentence. JEHOVAH ſpeaks to his afflicted, diſconſolate friends, borne down with complicated ſorrows, ſaying, *be ſtill*; [fear thou not, for I am with thee: Be not diſmayed: I am thy GOD: I will ſtrengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteouſneſs." Iſa. xli. 10.] *And know that I am GOD*; poſſeſſed of all poſſible perfections. Turn off your attention from your trials to me, in whom you ſhall find enough to make you happy, through time, and in eternity. Know, that I have *wiſdom* to guide you —*power* to ſupport you—and all *fulneſs* to ſupply you.—Know that I never change; therefore, though I *correct*, I will not *deſtroy* you.—Though I cauſe grief, I will have compaſſion according to the multitude of my mercies.

KNOW that I am GOD, therefore at the head of all things, directing all events in ſuch a manner, as ſhall beſt ſubſerve my vaſt deſigns. If you meet with trials great and many, remember, ſaith the LORD, they

they are neceſſary parts of my fixed plan of moral government.—It muſt be ſo, however painful it may be to you.

We ſhould bear in mind, my brethren, that GOD ſees the end from the beginning, and that the moſt minute events are under his controul; even the trifling ſparrow doth not fall to the ground without his knowledge: It follows, that, in the concluſion, the whole ſhall iſſue in the more ample diſplay of divine glory, and the good of thoſe who love GOD, and are the called according to his purpoſe.

KNOW that I am GOD—therefore have a ſovereign right to diſpoſe of you and yours, as I pleaſe. If ſo, it is our incumbent duty to receive all the bleſſings which he lends us, with gratitude, and to reſign them at his call with abſolute ſubmiſſion. Remember the conduct of Job under a moſt accumulated affliction: "The LORD gave," ſays he, "and the LORD hath taken away; bleſſed be the name of the LORD."

BUT we are too apt to miſtake the nature of our enjoyments—to place too high a value on them—and to forget that they may be taken from us: Hence it is that our trials come unexpectedly, and are much harder to be borne.

No truth is more generally received than this, that all the bleſſings we enjoy are *lent to us*; and that GOD hath a right to take them from us, when he pleaſeth. Why then repine?—Mourn we may, murmur we muſt not; nor ſhall we, if we feel the influence of this ſacred ſaying, *Know that I am GOD*, —and that divine corrections ariſe not from *error* or *reſentment*.——"He is a rock; his way is perfect; a GOD of truth, and without iniquity; juſt and right is he." His infinite wiſdom excludes the poſſibility of error—and the benignity of his nature, that of unneceſſary chaſtiſement.

"AND ye have forgotten," ſays the Apoſtle, "the exhortation which ſpeaketh unto you

as unto children: My ſon, deſpiſe not thou the chaſtening of the LORD, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him; For whom the LORD loveth he chaſteneth, and ſcourgeth every ſon whom he receiveth.—Furthermore we have had fathers of our fleſh who corrected us, and we gave them reverence: Shall we not much rather be in ſubjection to the Father of ſpirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chaſtened us after their own pleaſure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holineſs." Heb. xii. 5—11. Hence we learn, that the afflictions of believers are fatherly chaſtiſements; and may reſt ſatisfied, that "Like as a father pitieth his children, ſo the LORD pitieth them who fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are duſt." He will therefore correct us in meaſure, not in his anger, leſt he ſhould bring us to nothing.

And, to crown the whole, he will cauſe theſe "Light afflictions, which are but for a moment, to work for us a far more exceeding and eternal

weight

weight of glory; while we look not at the things that are ſeen, but at the things that are not ſeen: For the things that are ſeen, are temporal; but the things that are not ſeen, are eternal." True indeed, "No affliction for the preſent is joyous, but grievous; nevertheleſs, in the end, it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteouſneſs to them who are exerciſed thereby."

It has often been the caſe, that believers have reaped the greateſt ſpiritual advantages from their greateſt trials.

"*Affliction is the good man's ſhining ſcene;*
Proſperity obſcures his brighteſt ray;
As night to ſtars, woe luſtre gives to man †."

The object of theſe conſiderations is, to promote that temper which the text inculcates; even a patient waiting upon the LORD in the day of trouble.

From this ſubject would naturally ariſe a variety of important reflections; but I ſhall confine

† Night Thoughts.

confine myſelf to the ſolemn occaſion of this meeting.

BEHOLD the remains of our departed friend—he ſleeps in death—and the place that has long known him with peculiar pleaſure, ſhall know him no more.—He acted his part in life with honour to himſelf, and advantage to the world—his end was peace, and his memory is precious.

PERHAPS there is nothing more difficult than to give characters; we ſay too much for ſome, and too little for others; but in this inſtance, the deceaſed was too well known, and his character too long eſtabliſhed, to need any commendation from me. Yet I wiſh to gratify my preſent feelings, by ſaying, that for twenty years I have enjoyed an intimate and pleaſing acquaintance with him, and knew him well.—He was the affectionate huſband—the tender father—the compaſſionate maſter—the dutiful ſon—the loving brother—and the ſteady, faithful friend. He took much pains, by reading and by converſation, to inform his mind; and had acquired

general

general knowledge: But religion was his favourite ſubject. To Chriſtianity in general, as founded on a fulneſs of evidence, and to its peculiar doctrines, he was firmly attached. And from his uniform temper—his love to the goſpel, and to pious men—together with his many and generous exertions to promote the cauſe of Chriſt, we may ſafely conclude, that he had taſted that the LORD is gracious.—Therefore we ſorrow not as they who have no hope. He was a Baptiſt from principle, and a lover of good men of all denominations. Bleſſed with opulence, he was ready to diſtribute to public and to private uſes.—In his death, the College in *this place*—*this* Church and Society—the town of Providence—and the general intereſts of religion, learning and liberty, have loſt a friend indeed; but moſt of all his amiable family and connexions.—To the diſtreſſed widow—the fatherleſs children †—an aged mother tottering on the brink of the grave—

† Mr. BROWN left two children, a ſon and a daughter, both of age.——We heartily wiſh they may, through life, act worthy of ſuch a father;—of which, at preſent, there is a pleaſing proſpect.

grave—the afflicted brothers, and only ſiſter, with every other weeping relative, I beg leave to ſay—we wiſh you a bleſſing from the houſe of the LORD—that you may find every ſupport that religion can afford you, under this ſolemn viſitation; and be enabled to improve it to your own ſpiritual advantage, and the glory of GOD. He has viſited you with breach upon breach—you have been in deaths oft ‡. Three months have ſcarce paſſed, ſince a very promiſing youth ¶ ſuddenly fell a victim to the ſtroke of death. And to-day the father follows his accompliſhed, much loved ſon, to the houſe appointed for all living.—— But I ſtop, leſt you be ſwallowed up with over-much ſorrow. May grace, mercy and peace,

‡ Since the commencement of the year 1783, nine perſons have been buried out of this family; Mr. BROWN has now followed a former wife, ſix children, and a ſervant, to the grave.

To which melancholy catalogue muſt be added, JOSEPH BROWN, Eſq; Profeſſor of experimental Philoſophy in Rhode-Iſland College, the amiable and pious brother of our departed friend; who died December, 1785, to the unſpeakable grief of his family and acquaintance.

¶ MOSES BROWN, aged 16, who died the 28th of February laſt, after a ſhort illneſs. He had juſt finiſhed his education at

peace, reſt upon you; and as your day is, may your ſtrength be. In life, may you be uſeful and happy—in death, triumphant through the grace that is in CHRIST JESUS; and, finally, may you meet your pious departed friends in that world where your joy ſhall be full.

YOUR friends ſincerely ſympathize with you, my brethren of this Church and Society, under your preſent great loſs. GOD hath been pleaſed to remove from you the man who loved your intereſt, and was always ready to promote it. His example was worthy of imitation; for he was conſtant and ſerious in his attendance on the public worſhip of GOD—nor would he excuſe his family in the omiſſion of this important duty, unleſs hindered by unavoidable occurrences.

His death is a loud call to you eſpecially who have grown up with him, and are of his own

at College, and gave every mark of an uncommon genius. His friends were flattered, and his proſpects pleaſing. But death hath nipped this beauteous flower in the bud.—— "Not loſt, but gone before," is a ſentiment full of conſolation to mourners, as it reſpects believers.

own age.——Though dead, he yet ſpeaketh with ſilent, but perſuaſive eloquence:—"Be ye alſo ready; for in ſuch an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh." And bleſſed is that ſervant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, ſhall find ſo doing.

Nor is the call to you only, but to all; of whatever age or character.—We ſtand equally expoſed to the ſtroke of death, which falls alike on all, whether young or old. Indeed, my friends, it will be a moſt ſolemn thing to die. This truth, now affecting, will be more ſo when death approaches, and eternity opens to your view. You may hurry along through life, amidſt the calls of buſineſs and company, and hold religion at a diſtance; but in the hour of death, when your fleſh and your heart fail, you will want its ſupport. May we all be ſo happy as to be *ſtill*, and know that the LORD he is GOD—to whom belong the kingdom, the power and the glory.—Amen.

The following Sketch of the CHARACTER *of the Deceaſed appeared in the* Providence Gazette *of* June 4, 1791.

ON Sunday laſt, near the middle of the day, departed this life, at his houſe in this town, NICHOLAS BROWN, Eſq; in the 62d year of his age.

OF late years he had laboured under many infirmities, but without being confined to his chamber till the laſt winter. He had ſo far recovered his ſtrength as to take the air in pleaſant weather, and had been out three or four miles that morning; after which the hand of death, by a ſudden and gentle ſtroke, relieved him from the cares of this mortal life.

FROM his early youth he had been exerciſed in mercantile buſineſs, and thereby acquired a very ample fortune; but his ſucceſs in trade was not more remarkable than his diligence, regularity and punctuality.

His genius was too copious and enterprizing to be engroſſed by one object. The intereſts of government, learning and religion, eſpecially the latter, lay near his heart. He loved his country, he rejoiced in her freedom, he exulted in the eſtabliſhment of her government.—The public buildings in the town of Providence, ſacred to religion and ſcience, are monuments of his liberality. His purſe was open at every call of virtue and learning, without regard to ſect or party.

He was an early, perſevering and zealous patron of the College in this town, and a moſt exemplary member of the Baptiſt Society. The language of his conduct was, like that of the Patriarch of old,—"*As for me, and my houſe, we will ſerve the* LORD."—His religious zeal was the effect of a rational conviction of the great truths of the Chriſtian revelation; truths which had been his ſtudy for many years, and in which his knowledge was deep and extenſive. His awful reverence for the Deity impreſſed every one who heard him ſpeak, or ſaw him

write*, the ſacred name of the Great Creator and Governor of the World.

He was, from ſentiment, a lover of all mankind—eſpecially of good men. He was not aſhamed of the goſpel of Chriſt; but deemed it an honour to be reckoned among, or to ſhew hoſpitality to, the pooreſt of his diſciples.

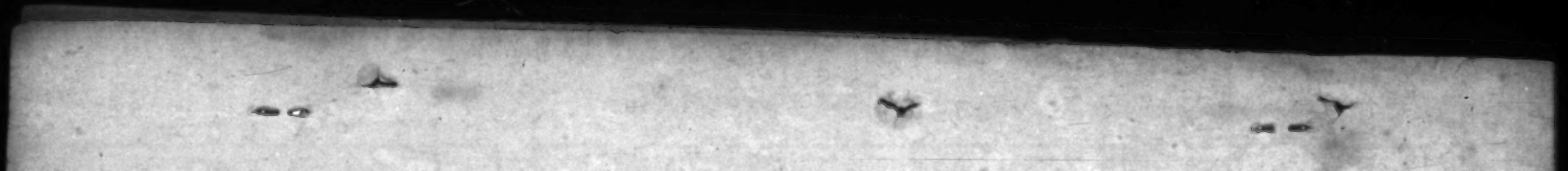
His manners were plain and ſincere. He was a faithful friend, and a good companion. His general knowledge of the world, of books and of men, as well as of buſineſs, and the fruitfulneſs of his invention, furniſhed him on all occaſions with inexhauſtible funds of entertaining converſation.

He eſtimated worldly objects too wiſely to be fond of office, popularity, or the pageantry of riches: He uſed, however, to take no leſs pains to advance good men to public offices, than to avoid them himſelf—and always threw the weight of his influence into the ſcale of juſtice and humanity; and as in his life he was univer-

* It was his cuſtom, and he often deſired others, to write it in capitals.

univerſally eſteemed, ſo at his death he was univerſally lamented.

In him the public have loſt a good citizen, and a defender of the rights of men—the College, a *Mæcenas*—the religious Society to which he belonged, an ornamental and main pillar—the circle of his acquaintance, a faithful counſellor and friend:—His family have loſt —— ——; but their loſs is not to be expreſſed—his diſconſolate widow and weeping children—his aged mother—his brothers, and his lonely ſiſter, beſt know the virtues of his private life—virtues that will endear his memory to them, while the power of memory laſts.

On Tueſday his remains, after having been carried to the Baptiſt meeting-houſe (where a ſermon was preached by the Reverend Dr. Stillman, of Boſton) were decently interred at the north burying-place in this town, attended by a numerous train of weeping relatives and friends, aſſembled to give the laſt proof of their affectionate attachment to the deceaſed.

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